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**Remarks at the Regional Water Quality Control Board
Meeting on**

Contamination of Drinking Water and chromium 6

November 13th, 2000

Background and Facts:

- **The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power on its own initiative began testing for low levels of chromium 6 eighteen months ago.**
- **DWP has found low levels in the ground water and reported our findings to the California Department of Health Services, the agency that sets water quality standards.**
- **To put our situation in perspective, the chromium 6 levels found in the PG&E case at Hinkley were in the 23,000 parts per billion range (ppb). DWP has found less than 10 ppb of chromium 6 in the drinking water in LA.**
- **As an agency responsible for providing safe water, we call upon our policy makers to make clear what is required. DWP is not the “doctor” and we are ready, willing and able to comply with any standard that is set, but we and any concerned citizen needs a clear answer from the State of California as to just who is the “doctor” and what he or she requires.**
- **Right now we are told by the Department of Health Services, the State designated “doctor” that our water is okay while the public is given good reason to think otherwise by goals set by California EPA pursuant to another state law. What is a responsible agency to do?**

Here’s what we have done.

- **The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has a practice of staying well below established standards and that is true in the case of chromium as well.**
- **In August, DWP stopped pumping two wells that were found to have had on occasion higher levels of chromium, and since then have established a policy to discontinue the use of any well source**

that shows chromium 6 values above 10 ppb. This guarantees our commitment to serve water always below 10 ppb to the customers.

- **Regardless of the chromium 6 levels in any DWP well, the water we serve to our customers is always below 10 ppb. We have also conducted special surveys of tap water at several of our facilities throughout the city. The values of chromium 6 ranged from 0.06 ppb to 0.96 ppb.**
- **Using the best available testing technology, we have not detected any chromium 6 in our customers' drinking water above 10 ppb.**

DWP actions currently underway:

- **DWP has entered into a partnership with the cities of Glendale, Burbank and San Fernando to identify the most promising technologies available in the near term to remove chromium 6 to the lowest possible level. This partnership will also take a good look at other contaminants in the groundwater that may deserve just as much attention.**
- **The Department has contacted Dr. Arup Sengupta of University Lehigh, Pennsylvania, to lead a research effort along with other experts, where innovative treatment technologies that have only been successfully tested in the laboratory are going to be tested in the field to validate them.**
- **One of the most promising technologies in this area is Ion Exchange. This technology has not been proven to effectively treat large quantities of water down to the level of the Public Health Goal for chromium. We intend to support the research needed to validate this as a viable technology for our situation.**
- **DWP is encouraging and supporting research and data collection and has already shared information on its chromium 6 findings with DHS and other relevant public agencies. We are encouraging the DHS to complete their review of the standards.**

- **Provide information on our experiences with different laboratories' abilities to test at low levels.**
- **Purchase specialized equipment to enable the Department's own laboratory to analyze for chromium 6 at the newly recommended low levels.**
- **Strongly support regional efforts by the San Fernando Valley Watermaster's Office and the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) to identify sources of contamination, and offer any assistance needed to remedy or reduce the potential for impact of local pollutants to our groundwater supply.**

The Role of Technology

- **It is useful to recognize the role of detection technology in order to understand our current situation.**
- **I am aware of the recent announcement by DHS of a certifiable laboratory method to analyze for chromium 6 down to 1 ppb. I am delighted with this news, because this will finally lead to the availability of many certified laboratories that can offer non-conflicting information.**
- **Another problem is the fact that the regulations address total chromium while the real culprit is chromium 6. Current research has not been able to determine an exact relationship between these two. Clearly the standard must be revised to help us effectively communicate this to our customers.**
- **DWP is a leader in using new technologies that will allow better testing and screening. And we are supportive of further work by the scientific community to help us better understand potential risk to public health.**

- **We have never opposed more stringent water quality standards. And we certainly don't oppose more stringent standards for chromium 6. DWP is for public health safety first, period.**

The Bigger Picture

- **One may ask why not “be sure” and just stop pumping the ground water until the DHS review is completed. That of course is an option but we do not recommend doing so.**
- **There is no evidence that the very small levels of chromium 6 in our water warrant drastic action.**
- **Today, LA depends on its' groundwater wells for about 15 percent of the city's water supply..**
- **While focusing on one concern we must also consider the concerns with the alternative sources that would replace ground water. When you make the comparison you find that substituting surface water for groundwater will not to improve water quality.**
- **Surface water has higher levels of some contaminants than DWP's ground water including Total Trihalomethanes (TTHMs), Arsenic, and other contaminants. The detectable amounts of those constituents are well below State and Federal standards but also fail to meet the Public Health Goals.**
- **What I'm saying is that it is useful to examine all of our options before we take any drastic action on the basis of one concern only to substitute another concern. It is essential to improve our water quality across the board, which is what DWP has been doing for many years.**

Conclusion:

- **DWP believes it has taken appropriate steps and that we will do whatever is necessary to ensure the public's health is protected regardless of the cost. And for this by California Law, we rely on**

the guidance from the California State Department of Health Services.

- **The Department provides a water supply where the chromium 6 in the water is less than 10 parts per billion. The Department has already initiated voluntary testing on a monthly basis for each of our sources of water supply using methods that are capable of detecting down to 1 ppb. We will report this information to all the relevant public agencies.**
- **Through our partnerships with Glendale, Burbank, the city of San Fernando and the academic research community, DWP will continue to fund research efforts for finding new detection methods and treatment technologies to be sure standards are met and reviewed as necessary. The role of technology is absolutely critical both to detection at minute levels and for development of water treatment options.**
- **The DWP appreciates this opportunity to share our commitment and progress to date on the chromium 6 issue. The DWP is also fully committed to support the Board's regional efforts to address the issue of source pollution and protection of the groundwater basins.**